

Spying on reporters a danger to democracy

The secret seizure of Associated Press records by the Justice Department investigating an alleged leak of top-secret information represents a dangerous abuse of government power.

In effect, the AP has been put on notice that if it persists in reporting stories the administration doesn't like, the government can destroy its credibility and scare off its sources.

The results could be a near end to investigative reporting in Washington, where almost everything the government does is secret, especially the bad stuff.

Who, after all, is going to call an AP reporter and give him or her background information on a story — any story — when the feds might be listening?

Tips from second-level sources are the way most Washington stories come out because only the top guys in any agency are "authorized" to speak to the press. And they only recite the administration line.

This is not about politics. Administrations of both parties have been guilty of abusing the Constitution. Remember Dick Nixon and his enemies list? The whole Watergate cover up?

But the Obama administration has been deep into repression of the press. Despite the fact that the president himself last week renewed his support of a reporters' shield law which could have prevented this fiasco, his administration still defends the subpoena used to get AP reporters' phone records.

This act has a particularly chilling effect on news gathering because just the thought that the FBI might be listening will keep a lot of mid-level bureaucrats from blowing the whistle on their bosses. And that's how the public finds out about a lot of government

misbehavior.

Worse yet, the fear will dry up calls to other reporters. Who knows how many phones might be tapped in Washington, how many offices might be bugged?

It's not just that, of course. This is the same administration that allowed the Internal Revenue Service to hold up tax-exempt status for tea party-related groups that otherwise qualified just because they were conservative.

It's an administration, and a Justice Department, grounded in the Chicago-style tactics its leader learned at the knee of the Dailey family, who helped him get where he is and shared in federal appointments, influence and other spoils after his election.

There's nothing special about this bunch. No dreamers, no Camelot. Just politics, not as usual, but the worst kind.

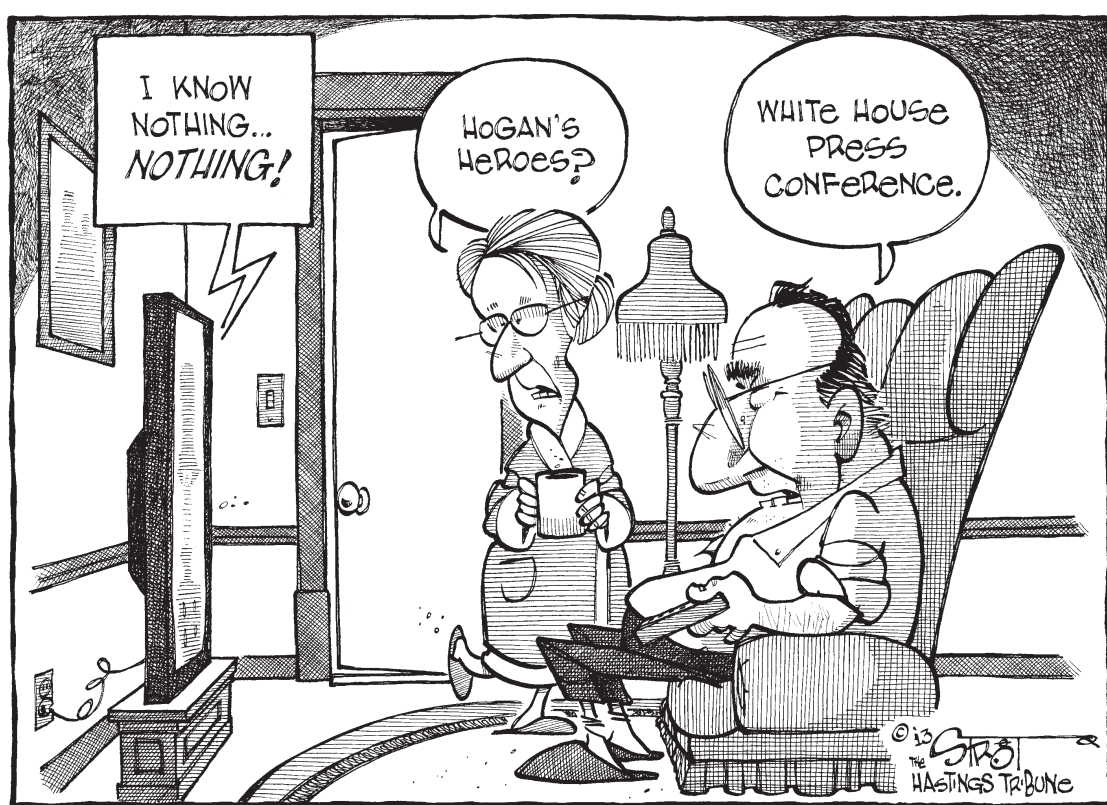
Tracing the calls on hundreds of phone lines, checking on everyone a reporter might have talked within a slew of AP offices, the government showed it can flex its muscle at will.

This intrusion surely underlines the need for a strong federal shield law, one that will protect reporters' sources, allow courts to ferret out true danger to national security and keep government goons at bay.

It's not that the Obama gang is the enemy. They're just playing the game, even though they should know better. A growing and powerful security apparatus that wants ever tighter control over every aspect of American life is to blame. Politicians in both parties play the game.

We all need laws to defend us, and reporters in particular, because we depend on them to tell us what our government is up to. We need them to be free and unfettered in that quest.

— Steve Haynes



Thank God for blood banks

The blood flowing in the tubing across your arm feels real weird when you are donating during the local bloodmobile.

It's warm, body temperature. Weird.

It feels even stranger when it's coming out of a bag on a pole and flowing back into your system.

It's cool, refrigerated. Odd.

I've been donating blood for more than 40 years. I started in college when my roommate was in charge of the Bloodmobile drive.

In Kansas City, I was on their list of willing donors, people the blood bank could call on whenever they needed my type.

And since my type is O positive. I got a lot of calls.

It was also something I could do for others that cost me almost nothing, and since I had little money, that was good.

I donated less frequently when we lived in Colorado, as the bloodmobile didn't come to our little town in the mountains very often, and it was a long way to the next town, especially when you have three little kids.

Back in Kansas in the early 1990s, I was able to start giving more often, and I always felt it was one of the things you do to help out your fellow man and your community.

And I was never alone in those chairs. There were lots of other willing donors stretching their arms out.

You could always tell when high school got out and the seniors arrived to donate.

Of course, we all smiled when a football player keeled over and the 115-pound grandmother took it all in stride. But, we all came. We all gave.

I really never thought of it as paying something forward. But, that's



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
cynthia.haynes@nwkansas.com

how it turned out for me.

I got a bad stomach bug while I was in Georgia. So bad I didn't go near my daughter and her new baby for most of the week.

Apparently that lit the fuse on a long-standing problem, which really took off. I was losing blood, at first a little at a time, then faster and faster.

By the time I got home, I was really tired. I couldn't walk up the stairs without resting, and I had an almost constant pounding in my head, like an overhead fan with a bad bearing.

I knew I was anemic, and decided it was time to see the doctor. Although I had been taking iron pills, I figured a stronger dose might be in order. I had things to do, and I was having a hard time getting them done.

My doctor ordered a blood test and after checking the results, announced that I was the most anemic person he had seen in more than a year.

He had me wheeled over to the hospital, where they put me on an IV while cross matching my blood. Over the next 15 hours, I got six pints.

Since my research tells me that the human body holds about 10, I think that means I was really low.

They told me that my hemoglobin, the cells that carry oxygen to the body, was at 4.8 grams per deciliter

of blood.

The average, healthy female has a count of 12 to 15. In fact, one of the nurses told me that under five is considered inconsistent with life. Well, I'm glad I didn't know that beforehand.

Steve keeps saying that I was three quarts low and my son noted that it looked like I'd had an oil change.

Whichever it was, I'm back to work and feeling fine despite a few jokes about becoming a vampire or a zombie. Or a vampire zombie.

They're still going to make me do some really unfun tests, but I want to personally thank all those grandmothers, football players, farmers and high school teachers who trotted down to the Gateway on Wednesday to give blood.

I wasn't with them this time. You never know when it'll be payback time.

From the Bible

For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience, wait for it.

— Romans 8: 24-25

Girl-stuff memories return

What is it about high school reunions that brings out "true confessions?"

Last weekend I crashed the 50th reunion of the class two years ahead of me. I was talking with one of the "girls" from that class and the still-handsome man who was the heart throb of every girl in school. She confessed to him that she used to have a huge crush on him and that she would practice writing "Mrs." in front of his name. Hoping that someday that "Mrs." would be her.

I asked if she remembered how girls would write their full names on one line; write their boyfriend's name (or the boy they wanted as their boyfriend) on the line beneath and then cross out corresponding letters in each other's names. If you had an "a" in your name and so did the boy, the letter would be crossed out. The remaining letters would then count towards the phrase, "Friendship, courtship, love, hate, marriage." It would be repeated until all letters were used and the fate of your relationship would be decided.

When I noticed his look of disbelief, I quickly added a disclaimer: "It's a girl thing."

"It must be," he said. "Guys don't do that."

-ob-

Between "borrowing" a bucketful of blossoms from my neighbor's



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
cplotts65@gmail.com

snowball bush, using every bud on a wild rose bush and cutting all the irises at our house and the rental house next door, we came up with enough flowers to decorate our family's graves.

This tradition of grave decorating seems to be unique to Midwesterners. And when this generation is gone, I'm not sure the younger people will carry it on. I told Jim that I doubted if anyone would put flowers on our graves. He was optimistic that our kids wouldn't forget us.

Just to be sure, though, I think I'll go ahead and plant a peony bush on our grave sites.

-ob-

It must be summer, because Sunday I made the season's first batch of homemade ice cream. It was son James' birthday, and we hosted an impromptu party at our house, complete with party hats, horns and candles.

We have a birthday tradition of

giving our kids \$1 for every year, up to \$50. I told them by the time they reach age 50, they will have to start giving us money.

I just ran the numbers on the adding machine, and by the time they reach 50, we will have given each of them \$1,265. Not a fortune, but a goodly amount that, invested right, could grow to a tidy sum.

My mother used to tell me, regarding gift money, to spend half and save half. Still pretty good advice, but hard to put into practice.

-ob-

Out of the blue, our 6-year-old granddaughter Aniston said to her mother, "If your birthday was January first, it would be easy to remember."

"Yes, it would," her mother said. "Do you know when my birthday is?"

"No, but I know when Grandma's is," answered Ani. "It's August oneth."

Women follow ball players

You could call them the Girls of Summer, I guess.

We were watching Class A baseball, "low A," really, the South Atlantic League.

The kids have a season-ticket package, which is both cheap entertainment and a pretty good time when they get a chance to go.

It's not "the Show," but a ball has its own charms. The infield play actually is pretty good, and if you like to watch kids turn double plays, or make the long throw from third, there's plenty of that. Plus, Class A has drama of its own.

Some of these kids will make it to the bigs, and a few might have real careers.

Others won't ever see triple-A ball, but all of them will have memories of life in the bus leagues that'll last a lifetime. These girls might be one.

Nik and Felicia usually sit behind the visitors' dugout.

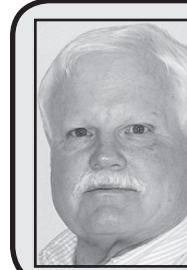
We joined them in the second inning, and the girls showed up sometime after that, taking seats right in front of us. Apparently, the tickets they'd bought weren't close enough to "their" dugout, so they'd gone and traded them in.

Class A ballparks have their own amenities, too. No sky boxes here, but the box seats down front do have waitresses to go get your food and drinks.

The girls weren't worried about food, however. Their interest was strictly on the field, with the boys of the Rome Braves.

If you've seen my favorite baseball movie, "Bull Durham," I'd put them somewhere between the classy Annie, the college English instructor, and teenage Millie. I never did get their names, though.

The girls knew all the players, of course, and cheered each one by name. Twenty-something, enthusiastic, cute if not exactly beautiful, they were fun to talk to. One



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
steve.haynes@nwkansas.com

explained that she was "dating" the guy who would be on the mound tomorrow night. Voluptuous and well displayed, she used a little Spanish now and then.

It seems all three were dating Dominican players who spoke mostly Spanish. The girl on the left, the pretty one with dark chocolate skin, kept correcting the first girl's pronunciation.

Her Spanish accent was pretty good, in fact, better than her college-Spanish background.

The girls talked excitedly about their guys, their team. They make all the home games, one said, and the closer road games.

They were in Augusta for a three-night series, then planned to go home.

"One fan down there said something rude to my guy by the dugout," the buxom one said. "He don't know how close he was to getting jumped."

The game was not going well for Rome. Augusta had a 2-1 lead when we got there and scored four more runs in the next couple of innings. As the night dragged by, hope for a rally faded away.

"Well," one said, "three more outs and we can go to dinner."

"We'll just have to listen to them complain," the one in the middle moaned.

"Aw, it's all in Spanish," the first one replied. "Who cares?"

Rome did score a couple of runs late, but by the top of the ninth, the score remained 6-3 Augusta. Levi,

the second baseman, grounded out, second to first. Then Elander, an outfielder, knocked one up the middle for a single. The girls cheered. Maybe there was hope.

Kalenkosky, the designated hitter, flied out to right, though, and that left things to the catcher, Chase. He worked a walk, which put runners at first and second with two out.

That brought third baseman Carlos Franco up to bat, representing the tying run at home.

He fanned at two pitches, then the Augusta reliever threw a curve ball in the dirt.

It scooted by the catcher and back to the screen, and the runners moved to second and third on the wild pitch.

That left the girls on the edge of their seats, but not for long. Franco hit a grounder to the shortstop, who threw him out, 6-3, to end the game.

We went back to our daughter's home and the girls went off to practice their Spanish.

In the U.S.A.

"I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity."

Dwight D. Eisenhower
U.S. president

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Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800
E-mail: oberlin.herald@nwkansas.com

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STAFF

Steve Haynes editor
Mary Lou Olson society editor
Carolyn Kelley-Plotts proofreader, columnist
Joan Betts historian
Cynthia Haynes business manager
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